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**Shivel(e)y Swirlware:**  
**Forgotten East Liverpool Art Pottery**  
By James L. Murphy





Marion Shiveley demonstrating at the wheel in 1948. Photo courtesy of East Liverpool Historical Society and the East Liverpool Museum of Ceramics.

Marion Shiveley and the collection donated to the East Liverpool Historical Society. Photo courtesy of ELHS and the East Liverpool Museum of Ceramics.

East Liverpool, Ohio, though advertised as “The Pottery Center of the World,” has produced very little in the way of art pottery, no matter how broadly one defines the term, concentrating instead on dinnerware. One undeservedly forgotten East Liverpool potter who did produce ware falling under the rubric of “art pottery” is Marion Shiveley, who threw an excellent grade of swirlware for some twenty years prior to his death in 1962.



Two small bowls, 3 ¼ inches high, undated. East Liverpool Ceramics Museum.



Molded and handpainted vase or carafe attributed to Marion Shiveley. Signed "M. Shively '61".

Gifford (1993) provides a good synopsis of known swirl ware manufacturers known at that time but includes only the Dalton or Houghton Pottery from Ohio. No mention is made of Shiveley or, perhaps less understandably, the relatively common and more familiar, brown and white Juanita Ware of Bert Crawford, made in Carrollton, Malvern, and Dalton, Ohio, for many years (Allison 1977, Schneider 1993).

Marion Shiveley was born in Bridgewater, Pennsylvania, in 1878, the son of George W. and Lida Arbuckle Shiveley. His father was a brickmaker, and Marion began working as a "wedger" at the Fallston Pottery near Beaver, Pennsylvania at the age of twelve or so. Two years later, he began turning ink bottles at the Enterprise Pottery in nearby New Brighton. He recalled that he worked four full weeks before producing an acceptable bottle; ultimately he made as many as 450 a day at a penny a piece, although he had to pay his wedger 50 cents from his own pocket. In

1900 Shiveley began working at Knowles, Taylor and Knowles' pottery in East Liverpool, Ohio, where he turned the snake-handled half-pint and pint whiskey jugs used by Meredith and other distillers and now highly collectible. Then he moved to the Homer Laughlin Plant 3 in the east end of East Liverpool, where he became a jiggerman and in 1917 a foreman in the clay shop. He continued at Homer Laughlin until his retirement in 1953.

The earliest art ware attributed to Shiveley is an orange-glazed vase dated 1934, the year of East Liverpool's centennial. It is crudely incised "Centennial Parade" on the base, so it is possible that Shiveley actually threw pots while on a parade float. What is certain is that during the ensuing years, as one of the last potters familiar with the art of throwing, he demonstrated the skill at numerous conventions and trade shows, including the International Brotherhood of Potters and the U.S. Potters' Association. He used an old potter's wheel salvaged from the Knowles pottery. In 1952, a demonstration planned for the local Kiwanis Club had to be postponed at the last minute when it was discovered that the potter's wheel was too large to get through the door!



An orange luster vase incised on base: Centennial Parade, E.L.O. 1934. East Liverpool Ceramics Museum.

**According to East Liverpool ceramics historian Lucille Cox (1942),**

"The vari-colored vases are exclusively the artist's own designing. He has spent many tedious hours in the basement of his home, working out the various shades and consistencies of his clays. Every ingredient is weighted carefully. There is no pug mill to remove air bubbles. He pummels, kneads and slices his various clays until he has them properly wedged."



A 4 inch high compote dated Oct. 28, 1950. East Liverpool Ceramics Museum

Even at this time, Shiveley's ware seems to have been a local collector's item, judging from Cox's article, and though he continued to produce his swirl ware for another fifteen years, working in a small pottery in the garage on the back of his McKinnon Avenue home, examples are by no means common. According to his obituary, he potted until 1957. He donated 15 pieces of his swirl ware to the East Liverpool Historical Society, along with his 1934 centennial vase and an undated small blue cup with attached saucer. Four examples are in a private collection, and a granddaughter has several pieces inherited from her father, Lawrence Shiveley, who potted for a while himself but did not enjoy it, according to his daughter.

Shiveley's swirl ware was usually marked with an ink date stamp and "M. Shively/Handthrown/E. Liverpool, O." under the glaze. Apparently he was not bothered by the misspelling of his name, which also occurs frequently in contemporary newspaper accounts and elsewhere. Available dates on Shiveley swirl ware range from May 6, 1942 to November 23, 1951. Earlier examples in the 1940s are stamped simply "Shiveley", with the extra "e" and a few are just dated "1941". The ware is characterized by a glossy clear glaze, distinguishing it from Niloak, Dalton, and most other swirl ware. Shiveley varied his clay formulas considerably to provide variations in color but seemed to favor lighter pastels, pinks and blues, while the primary white body is a distinctive porcelain clay similar to that used in hotel china.

After discontinuing throwing, Shiveley may have continued to decorate some pieces. A molded green handleless carafe bearing a well-executed, hand-painted jongleur and signed in black ink, "M. Shively/1961," is attributed to him and suggests that he might have excelled in design as well as throwing. At one time he said, "If you can draw it, I can make it!" In addition to vases, he also made lamps, though none are currently available. It is possible but unlikely that he made the unique Zanesville Nu-Art swirl lamp base but it has a matt finish and all marked pieces of Shiveley's ware are a high gloss glaze (Murphy 2000). Regardless, Marion Shiveley is a little known Ohio art potter whose work deserves greater recognition.





A 12 ½ " diameter plate by Marion Shiveley. East Liverpool Ceramics Museum.



Typical Shively mark, green ink underglaze, Oct. 26, 1950. Private collection.

### Acknowledgements

Ms. Sarah Webster Vodrey, Historic Site Manager of the East Liverpool Ceramics Museum, graciously allowed me to examine and photograph the pieces Shiveley donated to the East Liverpool Historical Society.

Phil Rickerd of the Museum staff very kindly located the pieces in the museum collections and provided assistance in photographing them. The Museum also provided several newspaper clippings and a copy of Shiveley's death record.

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